

# **THE MYTHIC MODE IN SELECTED POEMS FROM GARY SNYDER'S EARLY LANDSCAPE POETRY**

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**PROF. HANA KHALIEF GHANI (PH.D)**  
**ASST. INSTRUCTOR NAZAR SAHIB MAHDI**

**UNIVERSITY OF BAGHDAD / COLLEGE OF ARTS / DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

**استخدام الخرافة في قصائد مشاهد مختارة من شعر كاري سنايدر الاول**

**كلمات مفتاحية: ( الخرافة / قصائد / مشاهد )**

**أ.د هناء خليل غني**

**م.م نزار صاحب مهدي**

**جامعة بغداد / كلية الآداب / قسم اللغة الانكليزية**

### الخلاصة

ولد كاري سنايدر في سان فرانسيسكو في ١٩٣٠ وكان احد شعراء ما بعد الحداثة الذين ارادوا مشاركة اهتماماتهم البيئية مع سكان العالم اجمع. وليعزز هذه الاهتمامات استخدم اساطير السكان الاصليين والصينيين واليابانيين في شعره الاول. تأثر سنايدر بتي اس اليوت ومزج بين الماضي والحاضر والمستقبل في قصائده الاولى. وكان يهدف من خلال شعره الى خلق تجربة ادبية لغرض تصوير نظام بئي افضل. هدف هذا البحث هو بيان كيف استخدم سنايدر الاساطير الهندية والاسيوية في محاولة لاعادة الترتيب والنظام للنظام البيئي من منظور ظاهراتي. يتضمن الاستنتاج ما توصلت اليه الدراسة.

### ABSTRACT

Gary Snyder was born in San Francisco in 1930. He was one of the poets who wanted to share his ecological concerns with all the world. To support these concerns, he adapted the Amerindians' and the Buddhist Japanese and Chinese myths in his early poems. Influenced by T. S. Eliot, he also merged between the past, the present, and the future. His aim was to establish new poetics that can affect people's life and urge its change toward a better ecological system.

The aim of this research is to explicate, from a phenomenological perspective, Snyder's exploitation of the Amerindian and Asian myths in trying to set the ecological system in harmony and order. Finally, the conclusion sums up the findings of the study.

## THE MYTHIC MODE IN SELECTED POEMS FROM GARY SNYDER'S EARLY LANDSCAPE POETRY

In his early poetry Snyder was influenced by the legacy of the nineteenth century studying of myths and concentrated on the myths of the native Americans. He was concerned with primitive social constructions and tried hard to understand them to reach a better understanding of the best relationship man can make with nature. To achieve this aim, he applied the mythic mode of Eliot and Pound. He acts as a hermit in his early poetry and plays the role of the shaman. He is also romantic in adapting the values the romantic poets assigned to nature.<sup>1</sup> He declared in his thesis that "Original Mind speaks through little myths and tales that tell us how to be in some specific ecosystem of the far-flung world."<sup>2</sup> The poet's duty is then to act as an instrument of a mythology that aims at integrating the individual in the society and the society in the ecosystem. Snyder does not use the old myths in his early poetry for their own sake, but he tries to generate from them a new mythology that is constructed from his daily work, everyday experiences and perceptions of the outside world.<sup>3</sup>

The first book of poetry Snyder published is *Riprap* (1959) in which he wrote some poems in the style of traditional Western lyrics; the second group of poems in the collection are written in the model of the haiku<sup>4</sup> which belongs to Japanese poetry; the third group follows the style and model of the work he was doing. This first collection of poetry is objective and dense. He declared to Donald Allen that "I've just recently come to realize that the rhythms of my poems follow the rhythms of physical work I'm doing and life I'm leading at any given time-which makes the music in my head which creates the line."<sup>5</sup> This comes from a source Snyder read, which is Wordsworth's *Preface* in which Wordsworth emphasizes the importance of pastoral life in focusing the emotions and merging them with eternal processes of nature.<sup>6</sup>

Snyder's early poems also have the imprint of the Imagism of Pound and Williams. Pound once declared that "the natural object is always the adequate symbol." This kind of poetry was a response to the fragmentation of modern life and led to poetry that has many surfaces without hints of a transcendental depth. The thematic center of *Riprap*, in Molesworth's words, "is the awareness that the need for solidity and harmony can be gained away from the city life, in the process of natural forces and cycles."<sup>7</sup> Snyder explains the meaning of the title word, "Riprap," as "a cobble of stone laid on steep slick rock to make a trail for horses in the mountains."<sup>8</sup> In this first book of poetry, Snyder tries to mix between landscape and language to point, geographically, to Pacific connections. Through physical labor he was doing a spiritual meditation and this appeared in his literary production. In another declaration to Donald Allen, he says, " 'Riprap' is really a class of poems I wrote under the influence of the geology of the Sierra Nevada and the daily trail-crew work of picking up and placing granite stones in tight cobble patterns on hard slabs."<sup>9</sup> The book contains poems of short lines and sharp, vibrant imagery. It is also topographical, visionary, and local. Snyder takes the American landscape and changes the perception of it to create a better picture of the place and a new awareness of its ecosystem. Then, his job is as hard as the making of the trail from the hard stones. He uses his poetry to describe Western land. He also, like Japanese and Chinese poets, rarely uses "I" in his poems because he is not concerned with himself as much as the energies that are transmitted in the natural world. The lines of *Riprap* have the picturesque quality of being like hard blows to any reader's mind.<sup>10</sup>

In one of the poems of *Riprap*, "Migration of Birds" (1956), Snyder provides his readers with one of the important sources of learning from nature. The poem pictures Snyder living with his friend Jack Kerouac in a cabin in nature before he left to Japan to learn Buddhism. The poet starts by introducing a visitor: "It starts just now with a hummingbird/Hovering over the porch two yards away/Then gone,...."<sup>11</sup> The hummingbird links the poet to two worlds: the first is the physical environment around him with other species of birds that migrate. The other world

is related to his consciousness which lingers now to learn from Buddhism the ways of nature. He wants to travel to Japan to learn how nature works in order to come back fully aware of how to deal and live in his homeland and how to preserve it.<sup>12</sup>

The hummingbird awakens the poet to the natural physical beauty that surrounds him and which contains “a bush of yellow flowers”, “the redwood,” and the “network of the sunshine” (ibid.). The migratory birds include beautiful birds like the “White-crowned sparrows,” “the rooster,” the “Golden Plover,” the “Arctic Tern,” “juncos,” and “robins” (ibid.). Kerouac reads in the *Diamond Sutra*, which is a Buddhist book that teaches about the nets of life. Snyder is awakened from the “big abstraction” (ibid.) which refers to the book that he reads, entitled *Migration of Birds* (1939) by Fredrick C. Lincoln. The poem takes the title of this book.<sup>13</sup> The redwood are an important element in the picture this topographical poem paints. They provide shadow for the followers and shorter plants and enables them to grow properly. They are inhabited by birds and, with the flowers, provide food for them. The redwood also participates in preserving the climate. The fee the birds give for this grace is filling the place with their melodious singing and this adds a further beauty to the scene. When birds migrate for spring in other places, the place becomes less beautiful. But when man, under economic greed, cuts these trees for ever, the picture turns horrible. The poet makes this natural picture with its birds larger than life to enable his readers to perceive reality differently.<sup>14</sup> Animals, here, represent man, his psychology, his desires, and his fate because they are one kind of creatures that share the world with other creatures, including man. Another point is that, through their migration and return, they prove that they are no less aware about life and its ways than humans. Humans can learn from them. Birds also point that all earth is just one place. The destruction of one of their seasonal parks and stops is effective on other parts and destroys life elements.<sup>15</sup>

Another poem that depicts nature as it is with all its elements is “Piute Creek.” This poem is influenced by the haiku line-form and depicts the poet visiting, in 1955, the Yosemite high land with its rocks and creatures. As in the previous

poem, Snyder tries to understand and establish the relationship between the land and human beings and he identifies himself with the non-human things he sees in the landscape:

One granite ridge  
 A tree, would be enough  
 Or even a rock, a small creek,  
 A bark shred in a pool.  
 Hill beyond hill, folded and twisted  
 .....  
 All the junk that goes with being human  
 Drops away, hard rock waver  
 Even the heavy present seems to fail  
 This bubble of the heart. (*NSP*, 6)

Snyder introduces a natural landscape of rocks, trees, hill, and creek. He follows the romantic tradition of making the “I” part of the natural scene and he creates a natural community that includes even the non-human. He does not speak from an individual perspective. Nature for him is the sublime that governs all its elements. In this case, Snyder seems to pity all previous nature poetry that describes the whole image of the static nature without paying attention to the wonder that can be gained from examining even the smallest things and the processes that happen to them in the exchange of energy. Nature for Snyder is not static, but a continuous process of energy metamorphosis that results in generation, death, and regeneration.<sup>16</sup> The materials on which nature works are seen much richer than the materials gained from examining man in a social context. Snyder looks to nature through the eyes that he gained from reading the Japanese poets. He idealizes the pastoral scene and finds it worth meditating. He wants to learn from this vast world and knows that any negative human interference can corrupt this natural system. He uses enjambment, “Drops” and “Gone,” to leave his lines open to additional interpretation and to express the wonder this world generates in him.<sup>17</sup> Murphy argues that Snyder leaves physical description and moves to meditation in the second stanza of the poem: “A clear, attentive mind/Has no meaning but

that/Which sees is truly seen” (ibid.). Here Snyder concentrates on the physical even in meditating because the knowledge one gains from the huge nature is still tentative. Murphy also thinks that these lines present the readers with a lesson that teaches them humility in front of nature.<sup>18</sup> It is not only the poet who watches nature but also nature watches the poet through the eyes of the Coyote or the Cougar:

Back there unseen  
Cold proud eyes  
Of Cougar or Coyote  
Watch me rise and go. (*NSP*, 6)

These two beasts seem to be more insightful than the poet because they have the power of gazing at him and he might not be aware of them or unable of seeing them in the darkness. In this way, Snyder states that even his consciousness is part of the greater consciousness of the powerful natural world that surrounds him. The lesson seems to convey that the world is complicated and needs deep meditation to uncover some of its mysteries. The world should be reserved through realization of the necessity of even its smaller processes and through not utilizing the natural elements excessively. This is the politics of this poem.<sup>19</sup>

In the final poem that has the title of this book of verse, “Riprap,” Snyder uses his topographical skill to draw three landscapes: the first is of the natural landscape of the rocky mountains of Sierras in California; the second is of the Milky Way and the stars it contains; the third is the depiction of these in his mind, which turns them into words and poetry. The materials of the trail-building process is hard stones, while the materials of the trail in the sky is the stars. The words become his solid materials to build the trail for his readers in poetry.<sup>20</sup> Snyder starts by describing the process of writing poetry: “Lay down these words/Before your mind like rocks/ placed solid by hands....” (*NSP*, 122). The poet compares between writing poetry and the building of the trail. Both are hard processes, but necessary. The “Solidity of bark, leaf, or wall” (ibid.) refers to his insistence to start from the physical world because it is the base. Then, he shifts to the Milky way and states

that it is also a larger trail that is constructed of stars and it is used by people over time as a guide. There is an interconnection for the poet between the land and its ways and the sky. A third element is added, which is the human presence that is also connected to the land and the sky.<sup>21</sup>

The interconnectedness of all things in this world is emphasized by the metaphor of the Japanese “Game of Go” (ibid.), which is played with a stone on a board. The essence of this game is the proper positioning of pieces. Snyder is also trying to create a pattern out of his experience and wants to affect and convey the way he perceives reality to his readers. The poet at the end of the poem emphasizes change, “All change in thought,/As well as things” (ibid.). He expresses the essence of life as change. The granite stones are formulated by “fire and weight” and are “a creek-washed” (ibid.).<sup>22</sup> Man should change his attitude and behavior toward the all-the-time changing world in order to keep himself as part of the harmony of the world and not a destroyer of it. Gray believes that this poem emphasizes the lessons of the previous poems of this book and identifies the lessons as “to respect natural processes, the need to learn from one’s work experiences, and to look upon oneself as a vital link in an interconnected universe.”<sup>23</sup> Snyder wants his words to be fixed in the minds of his readers as the solid stones that make the trail or the stars that shine in the sky to guide people.

The second book of poetry, *Myths & Texts*, was published in 1960 although it was written earlier. Snyder expanded the objectivist aesthetics to a larger social realm. The title of the book is borrowed from ethnographic studies. The word “texts” refers to the physical, sensory world of the everyday events, the world of the actual experience. This word includes the books that people handle and the natural world in which nature, through its forces, print information on different things, like trees, rocks and mountains over time. “Myths” refers to the world of imagination that contains and preserves different values from different cultures. His interest in myths started from the time of writing his thesis in Reed college, but in this book he uses different myths to create a new mythology and, thus a new order.<sup>24</sup> Snyder, like Eliot, may have read Sir James George Frazer’s *Gold Bough*



(1890) and Jessie L. Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* (1920), both of which try to find the relation between primitive religions and magic and the revered religions, Christianity. Frazer and Weston concentrate on the story of the Holy Grail. Frazer proposes that the myth of the fisher king and his sacrifice to restore order to his people and land are connected to the story of the Holy Grail, which he traces over different times.<sup>25</sup> Snyder highlights the authority of the tribe over other political systems and mixes facts with myths. The book is divided into three sections: "Logging," "Hunting," and "burning." Murphy believes these sections to refer to "commodified time," "pastoral time," and "mythical time" respectively.<sup>26</sup> In the lyric sequence of this book, Snyder tries to follow the life of different creatures and learn from them and from nature the necessary knowledge he needs to preserve the world. He learns through observation and through the different myths that are transmitted through generations from different Eastern and Western Cultures. But, the main source of mythology includes the myths of the oppressed Native Americans and their tribal community.<sup>27</sup>

In *Myths & Texts*, Snyder plays the role of the shaman poet who tries to transmit knowledge to other people. The shaman visits different places and learns from nature and animals. A shaman believes that animals' souls can lead him to the right path in life. Gray, states that the book has different voices that converse "cogently to the various influences affecting this poet's life: environmental ethics, bioregionalism, geographic community, animal rights, manual labor, and Buddhist practice."<sup>28</sup> Snyder uses the mythopoeic mode of Eliot and writes poems with cosmopolitan implications. He is no less visionary than Eliot and moves with an increasingly mystic awareness as a hermit. He is not local, as in *Riprap*. He is more optimistic than Eliot because he believes that vegetation myths did not fail. Unlike Whitman, he is not nationalist and sees the American Capitalism and its culture as a cause of destruction to the Pacific Rim and to the world. Travelling, as a technique, is clear in this second book of Snyder. He is also concerned with the proper relationship man can have with land.<sup>29</sup> Snyder defines reality as "a myth lived...it provides a symbolic representation of projected values and empirical

knowledge within a framework of beliefs which helps individual, group, and physical environment to achieve integration and survival.”<sup>30</sup> The three sections are meant by Snyder to represent stages in his quest as a cultural hero: “Logging” represents the separation from reality he must make to see the knowledge beyond everyday natural activities; “Hunting” represents his quest for knowledge and wisdom that can be gained from animals; “Burning” refers to the obstacles and tests the poet should pass to get enlightenment from the natural elements and gain knowledge that he wants to share with others to preserve the ecology.<sup>31</sup>

The first section, “Logging,” is influenced by the works Snyder did in the summers of 1951 and 1954, when he worked as a lumber scaler and log setter in Washington and Oregon. He saw the big logging companies devouring the trees of the West Coast area and destroying wilderness. He tries through this section to provide his reader with his countercultural poetry hoping to generate an ecological foundation to preserve the forests and the world.<sup>32</sup>

In the same section, Snyder tries to create his new myth by merging between real places and facts, on one side, with myths that are related to their subjects, on the other side. In the first poem of “Logging” Snyder states that, “The morning star is not a star/Tow seedling fir, one died/IO, IO,...” (*NSP*, 34). The first line alludes to Thoreau’s *Walden* and, thus, refers to it not only as a literary work but also as a myth about Individualism and self-reliance in America, which Snyder negates. At the same time it is a statement of fact about the real world, which functions as a text. There is another reference to another myth about the Great Mother, IO, or the wanderer, who is in Greek Mythology the mother of Dionysus who wandered for years to acquire her human shape and is connected with the changing of seasons. It may also refer to the religion of land worship.<sup>33</sup> There is also a reference to fertility of land through the image of the girls who run with a bough of pine. The place of the poem is San Francisco which is different from its mythic depiction, which is connected with the natives, and can be only restored in a dream.<sup>34</sup> The second poem of this section introduces the wrong done by man and the cause of the present destruction of San Francisco: “San Francisco 2x 45/were the woods around

Seattle:/Someone killed and someone built, a house..." (ibid, 35). The encroachment of urbanity into the forests made many animals homeless and corrupted the land. The cutting of the trees and burning the land affect negatively the life of the city. The second poem starts with a quotation from Exodus 34:13 which refers to the attacks on primitive religions of nature worship which is related to the Native Americans.<sup>35</sup>

In the third poem of "Logging," Snyder introduces the symbol of nature's durability, the "Lodgepole Pine," which throws its seeds on the ground. The seed cones need fire to open them and get the seeds out to grow. The fire here becomes productive, unlike the one in the previous poem, which is made by human and is destructive. The pine tree becomes like the traditional symbol of the Phoenix who can rise from the ashes. The lesson is that nature's cycles need no interference from man to go on and should be preserved. From this poem till the eleventh one, Snyder mentions the different creatures that live in the forest and their roles.<sup>36</sup> From poem 12 on Snyder repeats the image of the unnecessary and destructive cutting of the trees and corrupting the forests and the unacceptable reason for that, like making houses and furniture, as he declares in "Lodgepole":

Men who hire men to cut groves  
Kill snakes, build cities, pave fields  
Believe in god, but can't  
Believe their own senses.... (*NSP*, 43)

The trees and the animals are important elements of life and its mythologies and they can never be destructed without a great harm to the whole life. Snyder criticizes the Capitol System and Christianity for, in his view, failing to preserve wild creatures on earth.<sup>37</sup>

The second section, "Hunting," represents the religious rituals that are connected with primitive religions and the related animals. Snyder in this section moves in nature as the shaman poet who learns from animals. The dances of the hunters are related to their manifestations of the different selves humans have including the non-human. The selves prove that all things are connected and

related to this world. In the previous section, Snyder is determined to show man's concerns about the ecosystem and the communion that can be accomplished between all life forms. The second section is more of a religious intention and, thus, is spiritually instructed. Hunting animals is a hobby practiced by tourists when they hunt deer, bears, or any other wild animals.<sup>38</sup> The poet moves in the wild nature instinctively. He learned from Native Americans that hunting is intended for renewal of life, unlike the massive slaughter the White man carries out for economic interests. The hunter and the hunted meet in a communion of souls governed by a mutual respect.<sup>39</sup> The "first shaman song" places the poet in nature solitary and meditating in an attempt to create a new myth that takes its source from Buddhism and Amerindians:

sit without thoughts by the log-road  
Hatching a new myth  
watching the waterdogs  
the last truck gone . (*NSP*, 45)

Buddhism and the mythic animals, taken from indigenous myths, will guide the poet to gain the wisdom he needs to create a harmonious image of the world that can guide people in living properly without destruction of the ecosystem.<sup>40</sup>

In "hunting 3," "this poem is for birds," Snyder gives the readers the text of the life of different birds, like an eagle, a hawk, and a kite. Then he declares that "the future defined" (*NSP*, 46), which means that the future is determined by this myth of life and by birds which stand as a synecdoche for all nature and its power to effect peoples' life. These lines are followed by a description of a ritual of Native Americans and the Californian rocky landscape in a rainstorm. Then, the poet mentions "Mussels" and "ducks" (*ibid.*). Ducks are migratory birds that travel southward in winter and the way they navigate through thousands miles is still a mystery. The "Black Swifts" (*ibid.*) adds the color imagery of the storm and has a mythic role that is connected with the birds' "shoot by. See or go blind" (*ibid.*). The emphasis is on human perception of reality which must change if man wants

to see clearly. This is done by making the birds the hunters and man becomes the hunted. Nature's power on man becomes more than human power on nature.<sup>41</sup>

After determining the masters of the sky, according to Amerindians, Snyder in "Hunting 6," "this poem is for bear," mentions the powerful creature which rules the land. The poet describes the course of life bears follow and mentions the fruits and animals they eat. He states that the bear "rules the mountains" (*NSP*, 47) and not humans. He also uses the bear to show that nature's power is greater. He, then, refers to the myth of the "girl [who] married a bear" (*ibid.*). The myth is a proof that humans and bears are two related elemental species of the world that should live in harmony or the war between them can be destructive. The poet ends the poem with a comic note that states that he cannot even play with bears, not kill them. He gives the power and control to nature over humans.<sup>42</sup>

In "Hunting 8," "this poem is for deer," Snyder describes the accidental killing of a deer by a drunk driver who did not see it well at night. The poet describes the deer as "Howling like a wise man" (*NSP*, 49). The deer becomes the shaman who knows the mountains and the guide of the poet in his quest for wisdom. This voice of wisdom is lost after the killing of the deer. Thus, the killing of the deer becomes a warning against the wrong policies of America. Not only the deer, but all other animals and plants may be lost if man does not change his policies. The poet then expresses his ritualistic repentance for this killing because he knows the important role animals play in preserving life.<sup>43</sup> This poem reminds the readers of Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and the consequences of the unnecessary killing of the Albatross. In "Hunting 16" the poet defines another master of the mountains which conquered all the weathers and landscapes. It is the coyote that is the "trickster" for Red Indians. It is also another symbol for nature's power over man.<sup>44</sup>

In the third section, "Burning," the poet does not leave the landscape of the woods and the myths of the Natives, but concentrates on the Buddhist Fire Sermon. This sermon is intended for purgation from sins and regeneration. In this way, the section becomes more connected to the land than the previous ones.

Snyder declares through this section that the natural fires that happen in the woods are necessary for reintegration in life cycle. These fires are contrasted with the human-made ones that clear the land for building houses and destroying nature and the ecosystem.<sup>45</sup> Molesworth identifies a similarity between this section and Eliot's "The Fire Sermon" in *The Waste Land*, which is that both poets draw their landscapes from merging Western and Eastern myths and try to create a value that can rule and set things right in this world. This value belongs to non-specific side because it is universal. It is "love" or "compassion," in Molesworth's words. Love here is not only between humans but includes even the love of the non-humans.<sup>46</sup> The "second shaman song" continues the shamanic role the poet adapts, "Seawater fills each eye" (*NSP*, 56) refers to the connectedness of all things. There is a creation of the world here as a void in which everything is found in relation to other things. There is also an image of an infant in the birth canal. Karma is a Buddhist concept that refers to the present as a result of past deeds. The poet also mentions the river as another symbol of rebirth and life. The song ends with the poet in a ritualistic dance, "The sun dries me as I dance" (*ibid.*). The whole song is of hope and rebirth of life.<sup>47</sup>

"Burning 3" has two stanzas. The first, introduces the myth of the descent of Buddha to the underworld where "The mind grabs and the shut eye sees" (*NSP*, 57). The shut eye refers to the metaphysical ability to see beyond consciousness and is mystical. The mystical conception of reality becomes solid now. Love becomes part of nature as humans' bodies are part of it. The second stanza affirms the importance of love to preserve the world, "Clouds I cannot lose, we cannot leave./We learn to love, honor accepted" (*ibid.*). Love if not instinctive should be learned because it is the way to eliminate the cruelty that destroys the world.<sup>48</sup> Then the poet emphasizes the physical world as a primary base of perception, "Dropping it all, and opening the eyes."

In "Burning 13," the first stanza represents the poet's struggle to get released from the haziness of the senses. In the second stanza, the poet compares writing poetry to the text of life and he believes poetry is but a part of this text. The poet

wants the readers not to hesitate in defying the darkness of the world, “As long as you hesitate, no place to go” (*NSP*, 62). The poet also urges them to “Leap through as Eagle’s snapping peak” (*ibid.*). This means that the readers should gain vision through leaping from the realm of actuality to the realm of myth.<sup>49</sup> In “Burning 15,” Snyder invokes the landscape he sees from Mt. Sumeru. This landscape is shapeless and not constant but can be attained, “ ‘What is imperfect is best’ “ (*NSP*, 64). At the end of the poem, smoke from the forest blocks the eyes of the poet. This returns the poem to the theme of cutting trees and burning them.<sup>50</sup>

The poet in “Burning 16” presents songs from different cultures. The dream to achieve the desired state in the world is the call Snyder sings: “Dream, Dream/Earth! those beings living on your surface/ none of them disappearing, will all be transformed” (*NSP*, 66). The humans will succeed in living the spiritual reality that accompanies the physical world and be transformed to wise humans who have sufficient knowledge to preserve the whole ecosystem. The poem ends with the word “Coyote” (*ibid.*) as a signature and a symbol emphasizing the relation of the world of myth and reality.<sup>51</sup>

“Burning 17” ends this section and is divided into two parts. The first is entitled “the text” and the second is entitled “the myth.” Both are about fires in Sourdough mountain when Snyder worked as a lookout. The first lines of “the text” describe the great fire in the mountain and one can guess the hard work of the firemen to extinguish it. The rest of “the text” is a description of the struggle of the firemen to dig a line that limits the fast movement of fire. The important thing is the unexpected falling of rain which helped putting the fire out: “Toward morning it rained./We slept in mud and ashes,/ Woke at dawn, the fire was out,...” (*NSP*, 67). Man works in cooperation with nature and are both prized with a beautiful morning. This is actual life and what it should be like.<sup>52</sup> In “the myth,” Snyder compares the fire in Sourdough Mountain with the mythic fire in Troy. He also refers to rain, “Rain falls for centuries” (*ibid.*). As in *The Waste Land*, rain comes and it carries hope of rebirth and regeneration with it. Then Snyder refers to Buddha’s course of reform and specifies the whole universe as its place, “the

Milky Way” (ibid.). The final line returns to Thoreau, “The sun is but a morning star” (ibid.), which means that the readers have various possibilities of meanings and interpretations. The end of *Myths & Texts* is characterized by the merging of the world of myths with the world of texts and the blend is an idealized image in which the ecosystem is set in harmony and the whole world becomes systematic and ordered. Man works with nature and not against it and love and respect of all other creatures rule the world.<sup>53</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In Snyder’s early poetry there is an obvious influence of Eliot. He, like Eliot, tries to connect the landscapes of the present to those of the past in order to restore the past harmony to life and its resources. The bioregional concerns characterize the early poetry of Snyder in which he struggles to create a better ecological future. The old myths act as a proof that the modern political scene is corrupted and there is a need to return to the primitive, tribal system of the past.



## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Charles Molesworth, *Gary Snyder's Vision* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1983), pp. 2-6.

<sup>2</sup> As quoted in Patrick D. Murphy, *A Place for Wayfaring: The Poetry and Prose of Gary Snyder* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2000), p. 21.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> It is a poem of three lines in seventeen syllables. The Japanese Matsu Basho (1644-94) was one of the establishers of this form. Believing in the Buddhist principle that all life is impermanent, he called for writing poetry of mood and suggestion rather than that of mind and statements. The poem should be vivid, spontaneous, and expresses insights that reflect mortality. The poem should also tackle one of the seasons of the year. It should be light and built on inspiration. Bob Steuding, *Gary Snyder* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1976), pp. 57-8.

<sup>5</sup> As quoted in Molesworth, p.47.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 12-13.

<sup>8</sup> As quoted in Timothy Gray, *Gary Snyder and the Pacific Rim: Creating Counter-Cultural Community* (Iowa: Iowa University Press, 2006), p.91.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 102-110.

<sup>11</sup> Gary Snyder, *No Nature: New and Selected Poems* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), p. 15. Hence after, all further references to this book will be made to *NSP* followed by page number.

<sup>12</sup> Tim Dean, *Gary Snyder and the American Unconscious: Inhabiting the Land* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), p. 15.

<sup>13</sup> Gary, p. 127.

<sup>14</sup> Steuding, p.81.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Gray, 14-15.

<sup>17</sup> Molesworth, pp. 20-1.

<sup>18</sup> Murphy, p. 51

<sup>19</sup> Gray, pp. 118-19.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p.122.

<sup>21</sup> Murphy, p.61.

<sup>22</sup> Molesworth, p. 19.

<sup>23</sup> Gray, p. 122.

<sup>24</sup> Molesworth, pp. 23-4.

<sup>25</sup> See Jessie L. Weston, *From Ritual to Romance* (New York: Cosimo Inc., 2005), originally published by Peter Smith in 1920. See also Sir James George Frazer, *The*

*Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, ed. Robert Frazer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). This book is originally published in 1890.

<sup>26</sup> Murphy, pp. 33-34.

<sup>27</sup> Gray, p.39.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 63, 66-7.

<sup>29</sup> Steuding, pp. 70-3.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>32</sup> Gray, p. 68.

<sup>33</sup> Molesworth, pp. 22-3.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>36</sup> Gray, 70-1.

<sup>37</sup> Molesworth, pp. 35-36.

<sup>38</sup> Steuding, p.75.

<sup>39</sup> Gray, p. 79.

<sup>40</sup> Molesworth, pp.36-7.

<sup>41</sup> Murphy, p. 31.

<sup>42</sup> Steuding, p. 24.

<sup>43</sup> Molesworth, p. 33.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>45</sup> Gray, p. 85.

<sup>46</sup> Molesworth, p. 37.

<sup>47</sup> Murphy, p. 35.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 37.

<sup>49</sup> Gray, pp. 91-2.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>51</sup> Molesworth, p. 40.

<sup>52</sup> Gray, p. 94.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., pp. 94-5.

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